



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Resurrection”

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



Our text for today is **1Corinthians 15:19**:

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

Thank you for listening and thinking with me as we study God's Word to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

As we begin, let me communicate to you that my preaching is based upon the fact that every episode recorded in the Bible is literally true.

We live in a culture in which fantasy and fiction dominate, but we need to resist the allure of made-up stories and intellectually concocted arguments as we develop faith in the meticulously recorded factual history of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ by the eyewitnesses who were present on the scene.

We must do whatever we need to do to develop the personal faith needed to believe that the Bible is the absolute truth, and recognize that every fiction put forth by man or by the devil to contradict or minimize the impact of Biblical accounts is a lie.

My wife convinced me to speak extemporaneously today, as I have dealt with the health challenges of chemotherapy and radiation this week. So let me begin with my testimony. My friends, I was not converted in a church. I was raised in church, but I was jaundiced by the fairy tales that my parents told me as they made me learn about the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a child, Christmas Day was quite important in my mind, Christmas Day was the day that Santa Claus, who had infinite resources, as opposed to my parents, who were poor, would bring me the toy that I actually wanted.

In reality, my parents were middle class, but my Dad never let us know how blessed we were to have the few things that we had, because of our poverty. And when you are a kid and your Dad tells you that your family is poor, you believe it.

So, Santa Claus was a significant figure in my life, because although my parents could not get me that which I wanted, he could, one day per year.

But when I was in third grade, I learned cursive writing in school. We had pages that we had to copy in cursive, but the one thing I noticed was that everyone at school had their own cursive writing style. Also, I could tell the difference between Momma's writing, Dad's writing and my writing.

Imagine my surprise on Christmas morning when I look at the road race set that Santa Claus brought me. Santa Clause wrote exactly like Momma. How is this possible?



When I asked Momma about it, she looked at me and laughed. “Darryl”, she said, “you know there is really no Santa Claus.”

That Christmas, I found out the meaning of “fairy tale”. I’m trying to be a good boy thorough November and December because I thought Santa Clause was make a list to who was naughty or nice, but I could have saved my effort, because Momma was buying the presents from store. But even worse, I was trying to be especially good because Momma lied to me about Santa Claus.

Now, in my house, lying about doing something wrong was as bad as doing it. You would get a spanking for doing it, but you would get extra licks if you lied about it. And the people passing out licks were lying to me about the most important day of the year in my young, immature mind.

The Sunday after Christmas, we went to Church. I listened to the preacher talk, once again, about Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

Oh, you fooled me about the fat man coming down the chimney. You aren’t going to fool me about the dead man getting out of the grave.

But I had to go to church. Grandfather was a preacher, and Mom and Dad wanted my brothers and me to go, so we did. I never questioned them, but I always knew that the definition of faith is believing in something that you know is really not true.

But fast forward twenty or so years. My wife and I moved into this house, where the Lord still blessed us to live, and I, out of habit, found a church to attend. Interestingly, that church had an evangelism program. I thought that the purpose of the evangelism program was to get people to come to the church. But when Michael, one of the leaders of the evangelism, program came to my house to recruit me into the program, he told me that the program was actually about spreading the gospel of the life, death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Since I didn’t actually believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ any more than I believed in Santa Claus, I stopped him. “Well”, I said, “that’s not really true. No one has really risen from the dead. This whole bit about resurrection is just something that they tell folks to keep them in line.”

“No”, Michael said, “The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ actually, literally happened, and I can prove it to you.”

“Oh, really?” I responded, “I like proof. Go ahead. Prove it to me.”

Michael invited me to meet him in the grad stacks at the Michigan State University library, and when I met him there, we began studying the history surrounding the life of Christ, including His resurrection. I found out that the proof for the resurrection was not scientific, because science requires observable events to recur. We can prove that the sun rises in the east by repeated observation. Every morning, we see the sun rising in the east. After seeing this phenomenon so many mornings, we categorize it as a scientific fact. On the



other hand, historical events are unique. We cannot prove scientifically that the Declaration of Independence was signed on July 4th, 1776, because it only occurred once, but we can prove that fact historically, because we have the historical documents from the signing.

When a person is tried in a court of law, we may not be able to prove scientifically that they committed the crime in question, but we can prove their guilt historically, based upon the eyewitness testimony of those who were there. The Apostle Peter tells us, in **2Peter 1:16**:

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

Since the New Testament is the historical source document for the information that we have about the Lord Jesus Christ, we have examine the New Testament to ascertain whether the history that the New Testament transmits to us meets the burden of historical proof. If it does, then we have to reevaluate our preconceived ideas about the Lord Jesus Christ to put them in line with that which the New Testament tells us.

And so, I studied the history of the New Testament. I came to the conclusion, based upon the opinion of some of the greatest historians and archaeologists of the world who physically examined the source copious number of manuscript copies and source documents, that of the historical books of antiquity, the New Testament is the best attested to writing in the history of mankind.

From the period of 200 years of the writing of the New Testament, archaeologists had been able to find over 24,000 manuscript copies of the New Testaments. The second most attested to books and the Iliad and the Odyssey by Homer, of which there are 640 or so copies. The English scholar Dr. John A. T. Robinson postulates, based upon the evidence that the fall of Masada in 70 AD, when the Roman Legion destroyed the Jewish fortress, ending Jewry as a political entity in the Palestine until it was reinstated in 1948 after World War II, is not mentioned in the New Testament, that the entire New Testament was written before these events occurred.

The very fact that the Christian Church exists is a historical proof of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just imagine that Jesus was still in the tomb when Peter preached his great Pentecostal sermon. Listen to that which Peter said, in **Acts 2:22–36**:

22 “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—

23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;



24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

25 For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.

26 Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.

27 For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

28 You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'

29 "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

30 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,

31 he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

33 Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

34 "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand,

35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." '

36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

This is a motivating sermon, but not if the Lord Jesus Christ was in the tomb. The Jewish leadership could crush the fledgling church by simply going to the tomb, removing the body of the Lord Jesus Christ and parading it through the streets of Jerusalem. This sermon was preached in Jerusalem, which is the last place anyone would want to preach this sermon is the actual body of the Lord Jesus Christ was available to rebut their testimony. The fact that three thousand men joined the disciples in the church that day indicates that there was a need for an explanation of what was going on, and Peter supplied it.

Not only was Jesus' body not in the tomb, but Jesus' body was could not have been available at all. If the disciples actually stole the body, as they Jews instructed the guard at the tomb to say, the disciples would have been in mortal peril. One meeting between Pilate and the Jewish leadership would have caused the same type of pressure to produce the body be put on the disciples as was put on Jesus when He confessed to be King of the Jews. But the Jewish leadership never put any pressure on the disciples to return the body to the tomb, because



they knew that the disciples were cowering in the Upper Room when the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Let me reiterate that the church started in the place where the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified and buried. If there was any evidence that the disciples in Jerusalem were lying about the gospel, they picked the wrong place to lie, as the physical evidence would surely find them out.

If, as some have postulated, the women went to the wrong tomb seeking Jesus, it would have been easy enough for the Jewish leadership to correct their mistake and send them to the correct tomb, where the body would actually be.

If, as some have postulate, the Roman Centurion mistakenly declared Jesus dead when He was actually alive, and Jesus simply “woke up” inside of the tomb, it would have been impossible for the almost dead Jesus to convince the disciples that He had actually risen from the dead when He would have needed serious medical treatment, food and rest to recover from his copious wounds.

And if Jesus somehow escaped death on the Cross and was somewhere actually alive during the formation of the early church, how can His detractors explain the historical conversion of his brother James or the Apostle Paul? Jesus’ brothers did not believe in Him before His death, burial and resurrection, but Paul list Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, in **1 Corinthians 15:3–8**:

3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that [the Lord Jesus] Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

4 and that [the Lord Jesus Christ] was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

5 and that [the Lord Jesus Christ] was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

6 After that [the Lord Jesus Christ] was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

7 After that [the Lord Jesus Christ] was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

8 Then last of all [the Lord Jesus Christ] was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

James became a believer and the writer of the book of James. Paul persecuted the church and put those who preached the gospel in prison, but for some reason, Paul then changed his tune and became one of the foremost preachers of the gospels and the author of over half of the New Testament. What would have been James’ and Paul’s motivation if Jesus had not died and rose again, but was hiding somewhere on planet earth?

The history of the early church, given in the Gospels and in contemporary historical writings, is impossible to reconcile with anything other than the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross, was buried in Joseph’s new tomb, and then rose from the dead on that first Easter Sunday morning. The New Testament records the formation of churches, first at Jerusalem in the book of



Acts, then at Samaria, the Ethiopia, Damascus, Lydda, Joppa, Caesarea, Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch, Salamis, Antioch in Persidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, Berea, Macedonia and Thyatira. Paul wrote letters to churches established in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae and Thessalonica. But if, at any point, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ been seriously questioned as an historical fact, meaning that some authority tried to prove that Jesus as either still in the tomb or had moved from the tomb by physical reasons, including both His not dying or His being stolen, the churches in these places would not have been able to get off the ground.

I am giving you just a taste of that with which I was confronted, because I found that the grad stacks at the Michigan State University library has a wing full of history books and historical accounts of the early church, certified by some of the greatest historians in the Western World to be true. And the dissenters, by and large, did not reject the information because of its' historical insufficiency, but rather because of their world view.

I can say, without fear of successful contradiction, that the historical attestation of the New Testament is much, much better than the attestation for the founding of the United States of America. It is simply impossible to account for the history of the Jewish Nation, the Roman Empire and the Christian Church after the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ without the Lord Jesus Christ actually rising from the dead.

However, our text for today, **1Corinthians 15:19** informs us:

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

The actual purpose of the gospel is to prepare us for the next life, the life that comes after the cessation of our human life on planet earth, after our death. The Apostle Paul tells us, in **1Corinthians 15:22**:

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

I have recently become acutely aware of this statement. The diseases with which I have been diagnosed let me know that I should pray and thank the Lord, every day, that I open my eyes and live.

This is because the time that I have to spend on planet earth is much shorter than the time that I have spent here. I have been diagnosed with a disease, cancer, that is fatal in many people that have it. I am being given chemotherapy and radiation treatment to endeavor to arrest my cancer. This is my second round of chemotherapy, as the efficacy of the first round lasted a few months. There are only so many treatments available, after which the doctors will tell me that there is nothing more that they can do. But, as I was telling a friend of mine earlier this week, even if the Lord touches my body and completely heals me of this disease, He will not be healing me of old age.

The Bible tells me, in **Psalms 90:10**:



10 The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

So, I am no doubt closer to the end of my life here than the beginning. I have a four-year-old granddaughter and a two-year-old grandson. It is doubtful that I will have the opportunity to dance at their wedding.

But that is not to say that I have no hope. It is time for mature me to understand Paul's words given in **1Thessalonians 4:13–18**:

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The Lord Jesus Christ's own words comfort me. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke them to the criminal that hung and died on the Cross next to Him, in **Luke 23:42–43**:

42 Then [the criminal] said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

The Apostle Paul assures us, in **2 Corinthians 5:1–8**:

1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,

3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.

4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.



7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Easter Sunday is a reminder for us to prepare. As the hymnologist said,

If you miss me from singing down here, and you can't find me nowhere,
Come on up to Bright Glory...I'll be singing up there.

The Lord Jesus Christ found Himself facing death itself, in the Garden of Gethsemane. And He was sorrowful about it. **Matthew 26:36–39** informs us:

36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.”

37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed.

38 Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”

39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

Oh, it is difficult for any of us to let go of this life. And the Lord Jesus Christ especially, because He was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and could have taught and ministered into perpetuity with power.

However, the Lord Jesus Christ had to make the transition. Not because, as **1 Corinthians 15:22** tells us, in Adam all die, for He was the seed of the woman. There was no man involved in his birth. Thus, the sin of Adam was not imputed to the Lord Jesus Christ. But the Lord Jesus Christ had to make the transition from life to death to pay for our sins.

This is real talk. Paul tells us, in **Romans 3:23**:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

And it would be a terrifying prospect to stand before the bar of judgment and be judged for the willful sins that we have committed. So, that Lord Jesus Christ volunteered to die in our place, to suffering the punishment of being alienated from the Lord God in our place, to pay the penalty that we owe for the sins that we have committed.

After the Lord Jesus Christ's prayer, in **Matthew 26:42**:

42 Again, a second time, [Jesus] went away and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.”

The Lord Jesus Christ was prepared. So, they took Him down to Old Man Annas. Then from Annas to Caiphas. Then from Caiphas to Pilate. Then from Pilate to Herod. Then from Herod back to Pilate again.

Pilate put Jesus before the Jewish people. **Matthew 27:15–17, 20-26:**



15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished.

16 And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.

17 Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.

21 The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!"

22 Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!"

23 Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"

24 When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it."

25 And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."

26 Then [Pilate] released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.

They marched Jesus up the Via Dolorosa to the place of the skull that they called Golgotha and Calvary.

They stretched Jesus wide. They hung Jesus high. They watched until He died. For your sins and for my sins. Then, they took Jesus down from the Cross and buried Him in a borrowed tomb.

But that's not how the history ends. Three days later, when no one was expecting Him; three days later, when no one was looking for Him, an angel came down from heaven and rolled the stone away. And the Lord Jesus Christ rose physically from the dead.

They looked in the grave and the grave clothes were there, but the grave clothes were empty. They looked at the slab that He had been laid on, but He was not there.

Oh, at first, they didn't know what to think. But then, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in the midst of them. They were frightened as though they were look at a ghost, but Jesus reassured them, "Look at me, that it is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones that you see that I have."

The disciples were convinced, but old Thomas was missing from the meeting. But when the disciples met again a week later, Thomas was there. Jesus said, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

Thomas answered, "My Lord and My God!"



Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

And that is where we stand. We have not seen the Lord Jesus Christ, but we have examined His history. There is absolutely no reason to not believe all that these eyewitnesses that have penned the New Testament have written and record in the Divinely Inspired Written Word of God.

No, science cannot verify it for you, because the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was a unique historical event. But the historical proof of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is overwhelming. And it is ours to do whatever we need to do to reach a point of saving faith, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation.

The history is available. It all makes sense. There is no other reasonable conclusion that a thinking person can come to, after examining the historical facts, than the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead on that first Easter Sunday morning. And, as the Old Hymnologist said,

I know it was the blood for me, for one day, when I was lost, Jesus died upon the Cross and I know it was the blood for me.

They whipped Him all night long for me, for one day, when I was lost, Jesus died upon the Cross and I know it was the blood for me.

They hung Him on the Cross for me, for one day, when I was lost, Jesus died upon the Cross and I know it was the blood for me.

He hung His head and died for me, for one day, when I was lost, Jesus died upon the Cross and I know it was the blood for me.

They pierced Him in the side for me, for one day, when I was lost, Jesus died upon the Cross and I know it was the blood for me.

He rose up from the dead for me, for one day, when I was lost, Jesus died upon the Cross and I know it was the blood for me.

I know it was the blood for me, for one day, when I was lost, Jesus died upon the Cross and I know it was the blood for me.

Pastor Darryl R. Curtis
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